

THE BREMEN TOWN MUSICIANS

Music I: The Characters

Students will

- Read **The Story of the Opera**
- Read the information sheet **The Characters** included with the lesson.
- Listen to audio selections from *The Bremen Town Musicians* online.
- Discuss and answer questions on the appropriate portion(s) of the **Activity Worksheet**.

Before the Lesson

Print copies for each student on the information sheet *The Characters* and the *Activity Worksheet*.

Decide which section(s) of the worksheet you wish your group to complete.

Prepare internet access to *The Bremen Town Musicians* online listening selections

at <http://www.operatales.com/bremen-town-musicians.shtml>

Gather pens, pencils and additional writing paper as needed for your group.

Introduction

Have your students read **The Story of the Opera**. Give each student a copy of **The Characters** or display it on the screen. Read through the information, discussing each character and listening to the online selections as you go.

Guided/Independent Practice

Depending on your grade level, the ability of your students, and time constraints, you may choose to have students work as a whole class, in small groups, with a partner, or individually. Read the directions on the **Activity Worksheet**. Have students complete the portion(s) of the **Activity Worksheet** you have chosen with opportunity for questions. If students are working with a partner or in small groups, give them time to discuss their answers before writing them down. Have students share their answers individually or by groups and tell why they gave their answers.

Evaluation

Have students discuss and evaluate the answers of others. The teacher may want to guide the discussion with the sample answers provided. After individual or small group responses have been shared and/or turned in, the class can then formulate comprehensive answers for the class with the teacher asking leading questions to guide the discussion.

For Further Study

The teacher may want to have students research varying versions of the story of *The Bremen Town Musicians*. Students may want to do additional research on the original fairy tale story by the Brothers Grimm, other works by J. Offenbach or John Davies, or other related topics online or in their school library. Their findings can be shared with the class at the beginning of a later lesson.

TEKS**Music:**

[Kinder] 117.103.B.3 Historical and cultural relevance. The student examines music in relation to history and cultures. The student is expected to: (B) identify simple interdisciplinary concepts related to music.

117.103.B.4 Critical evaluation and response. The student listens to, responds to, and evaluates music and musical performances. The student is expected to: (A) identify and demonstrate appropriate audience behavior during live or recorded performances.

[1st Grade] 117.106.B.5 Historical and cultural relevance. The student examines music in relation to history and cultures. 117.106.B.6 Critical evaluation and response. The student listens to, responds to, and evaluates music and musical performances.

[2nd Grade] 117.109.B.5 Historical and cultural relevance. The student examines music in relation to history and cultures. 117.109.B.6 Critical evaluation and response. The student listens to, responds to, and evaluates music and musical performances.

[3rd Grade] 117.112.B.5 Historical and cultural relevance. The student examines music in relation to history and cultures. 117.112.B.6 Critical evaluation and response. The student listens to, responds to, and evaluates music and musical performances.

[4th Grade] 117.115.B.5 Historical and cultural relevance. The student examines music in relation to history and cultures. 117.115.B.6 Critical evaluation and response. The student listens to, responds to, and evaluates music and musical performances.

[5th Grade] 117.118.B.5 Historical and cultural relevance. The student examines music in relation to history and cultures. 117.118.B.6 Critical evaluation and response. The student listens to, responds to, and evaluates music and musical performances.

[6th Grade] 117.208.C.4 Historical and cultural relevance. The student relates music to history, culture, and the world.

117.208.C.5 Critical evaluation and response. The student listens to, responds to, and evaluates music and musical performance in both formal and informal settings

Correlates: Language Arts, Drama

Gardner's Intelligences: Verbal-Linguistic, Musical, Interpersonal

Bloom's Taxonomy: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Evaluation, Synthesis

Sources:

The Bremen Town Musicians libretto

Warrack, John and West, Ewan, The Oxford Dictionary of Opera, Oxford University Press, 1992.

Online Resources:

www.operatales.com

The Story of the Opera

Eddie Pensier, a rooster with operatic aspirations, is chased away from his farm for waking the entire barnyard by singing tenor arias (songs). He decides to look for some pirates, who he thinks will be his friends and help him to survive. On the very same day, Barcarolle the dog, and Dorabella the cat, are cast out by their owners for being too old to catch rabbits and mice. As Barcarolle and Dorabella make their way through the woods near the road to Bremen, they meet General Boom, a retired army donkey, who is marching along playing his drum. After hearing the reason they were forced to leave their homes, the general awards medals to them for being nice to rabbits and mice. In further appreciation of their kindness, General Boom also invites them to come to Bremen to play in his new band. Dorabella and Barcarolle are overjoyed at the invitation but must decline because they have promised to open a retirement home for old dogs and cats.

Eddie, who has now joined the Sea-sick Pirates, has been hiding and watching General Boom, Barcarolle, and Dorabella. When Dorabella and Barcarolle leave, Eddie draws his sword and startles the general with a big shout, "Cock-a-doodle-doo! ARRRRRRRRRRRRR!" General Boom, after calming himself, asks Eddie to stop trying to frighten him and invites the singing rooster to Bremen to join his new band. Eddie declines the invitation because he has promised to never think for himself and will only do whatever the pirates command. Therefore, the general bids Eddie farewell but suddenly realizes his drum is missing! Eddie confesses that the pirates commanded him to distract the general so they could steal the drum. General Boom vows to get his drum back and recruits Eddie to help. However, Eddie does not pay attention to where General Boom is marching and heads off in the wrong direction.

Meanwhile, Dorabella and Barcarolle have gotten lost and start to blame each other angrily. They spot Eddie and demand to know who he is. Eddie demands to know who they are, and all three animals begin arguing so loudly that General Boom hears their shouting. He tells them that they should learn to get along and extends another invitation for them to join his band. With the woods surrounding the Bremen Road filled with uncertainty and rumors of pirates all about, they decide that it is best for them all to stick together. Therefore, Dorabella, Barcarolle, and Eddie agree to join the general's new band and march with him to Bremen. Eddie warns everyone that the house belonging to the Sea-sick Pirates is on the way to Bremen and that General Boom's drum is probably there. Working together as a team, the four create a plan to scare the pirates away from the house disguising themselves as a big noisy monster! Their plan succeeds and Eddie is able to return the drum to its rightful owner, General Boom. As they make their way to their new home, the newly-formed Bremen Town Musicians celebrate the idea that friendship, cooperation, and respect for others is far better than facing problems alone.

The Characters

Dorabella: (soprano) A cat and best friend of Barcarolle. She can't catch mice anymore so she's planning to open a cat & dog retirement home with Barcarolle. She meets Eddie and General Boom and decides to go to Bremen town with them to become musicians.

Barcarolle: (mezzo-soprano) A dog and best friends with Dorabella. Like Dorabella, he's grown too old and slow to perform his farm dog duties so he's looking for something else to do. He joins General Boom's musical band.

Eddie Pensier: (tenor) A singing rooster with artistic aspirations. Eddie is in danger – the farmer's wife plans to make him into a soup. He runs away to become an opera singer and joins a gang of pirates. The pirates send him to distract General Boom while they steal his drum.

General Boom: (bass or baritone) A retired military donkey and percussionist. He's on the road to Bremen town planning to become the town musician. He meets friends along the way and they have a big adventure.

Link to Musical Excerpts:

<http://www.operatales.com/bremen-town-musicians.shtml>

Musical Excerpts available:

Eddie's Song

I'm running away

from J. Offenbach's: *Orphee aux Enfers* "Eh hop! Eh hop!" G.
Verdi's *Rigoletto* "La donna e mobile"

Quartet

The time has come

from J. Offenbach's: *Christopher Columbus* "The blushing bride" Book by
John White 1976

Song

Wherever I am marching

from J. Offenbach's: *La Grand Duchesse de Gerolstein* "Piff, Paff, Pouff"

Quartet

Very slyly, sneaky, sneaky

from J. Offenbach's: *Les Brigands* "Deux par deux ou bien"

Name_____

Date_____

Part I

Activity Worksheet

Instructions: Have the students listen to the excerpts provided on The Characters sheet. Be sure the students consider the excerpts and their knowledge of the characters when answering the following questions.

1. In this story, both Dorabella and Barcarolle have to leave their homes because they are too old to do the jobs they used to do. Could their masters have come up with something else for them to do? Brainstorm some ideas and write them down below.

2. Eddie joins the bands of seasick pirates and promises never again to think for himself. What does that mean?

3. Have you ever seen someone behave without thinking for themselves? What happened? What was the outcome of their actions?

4. Sometimes bullies (like pirates) like to surround themselves with people who don't think for themselves. Why do you think this is the case? What is the danger?

Part II

5. General Boom invited each animal he encountered on the road to come with him and join his band. Think of someone in your life who always includes others easily in whatever they are doing. Why do you think they make a point to include others? What do you like about that person?

6. General Boom says, "Music likes differences. It would be very boring if we all sounded the same." Was he just talking about music? Explain your answer and give examples.

7. Imagine everyone in your school was exactly the same with no differences at all in the way you look, in your likes and dislikes, in your ideas or your abilities. Write down the pros and cons of this scenario.

Pros:

Cons:

8. Using information from your pro-con list above, write a paragraph describing whether or not you'd like to attend a school where everyone was the same. Give specific examples to back up your answer.

[illegible]

9. How can people who are very different from each other still work together to make something good happen? Have you ever seen this happen in real life? Write about your experience. If not, write about a situation that could have benefited from different people working together.

Part III

The story of this opera was based on the original fairy tale written by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, known as the Brothers Grimm. They lived in Germany in the 1800s and wrote many classic fairytales - think classic stories like Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood and Snow White. The original tale is on the next page. After you've seen the opera version, write a summary comparing and contrasting the two versions of *The Bremen Town Musicians*. Is the moral of the story the same in both versions? Give specific examples about how they are the same and how they are different.

The Bremen Town Musicians

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

A man had a donkey, who for long years had untiringly carried sacks to the mill, but whose strength was now failing, so that he was becoming less and less able to work. Then his master thought that he would no longer feed him, but the donkey noticed that it was not a good wind that was blowing and ran away, setting forth on the road to Bremen, where he thought he could become a town musician. When he had gone a little way he found a hunting dog lying in the road, who was panting like one who had run himself tired.

"Why are you panting so, Grab-Hold?" asked the donkey.

"Oh," said the dog, "because I am old and am getting weaker every day and can no longer go hunting, my master wanted to kill me, so I ran off; but now how should I earn my bread?"

"Do you know what," said the donkey, "I am going to Bremen and am going to become a town musician there. Come along and take up music too. I'll play the lute, and you can beat the drums."

The dog was satisfied with that, and they went further. It didn't take long before they came to a cat sitting by the side of the road and making a face like three days of rainy weather. "What has crossed you, old Beard-Licker?" said the donkey.

"Oh," answered the cat, "who can be cheerful when his neck is at risk? I am getting on in years, and my teeth are getting dull, so I would rather sit behind the stove and purr than to chase around after mice. Therefore my mistress wanted to drown me, but I took off. Now good advice is scarce. Where should I go?"

"Come with us to Bremen. After all, you understand night music. You can become a town musician there." The cat agreed and went along.

Then the three refugees came to a farmyard, and the rooster of the house was sitting on the gate crying with all his might.

"Your cries pierce one's marrow and bone," said the donkey. "What are you up to?"

"I just prophesied good weather," said the rooster, "because it is Our Dear Lady's Day, when she washes the Christ Child's shirts and wants to dry them; but because Sunday guests are coming tomorrow, the lady of the house has no mercy and told the cook that she wants to eat me tomorrow in the soup, so I am supposed to let them cut off my head this evening. Now I am going to cry at the top of my voice as long as I can."

"Hey now, Red-Head," said the donkey, "instead, come away with us. We're going to Bremen. You can always find something better than death. You have a good voice, and when we make music together, it will be very pleasing."

The rooster was happy with the proposal, and all four went off together. However, they could not reach the city of Bremen in one day, and in the evening they came into a forest where they would spend the night. The donkey and the dog lay down under a big tree, but the cat and the rooster took to the branches. The rooster flew right to the top where it was safest for him. Before falling asleep, he looked around once again in all four directions, and he thought that he saw a little spark burning in the distance. He hollered to his companions that there must be a house not too far away, for a light was shining.

The donkey said, "Then we must get up and go there because the lodging here is poor." The dog said that he could do well with a few bones with a little meat on them. Thus they set forth toward the place where the light was, and they soon saw it glistening more brightly, and it became larger and larger until they came to the front of a brightly lit robbers' house.

The donkey, the largest of them, approached the window and looked in.

"What do you see, Gray-Horse?" asked the rooster.

"What do I see?" answered the donkey. "A table set with good things to eat and drink, and robbers sitting there enjoying themselves."

"That would be something for us," said the rooster.

"Ee-ah, ee-ah, oh, if we were there!" said the donkey.

Then the animals discussed how they might drive the robbers away, and at last they came upon a plan. The donkey was to stand with his front feet on the window, the dog to jump on the donkey's back, the cat to climb onto the dog, and finally the rooster would fly up and sit on the cat's head. When they had done that, at a signal they began to make their music all together. The donkey brayed, the dog barked, the cat meowed and the rooster crowed. Then they crashed through the window into the room, shattering the panes.

The robbers jumped up at the terrible bellowing, thinking that a ghost was coming in, and fled in great fear out into the woods. Then the four companions seated themselves at the table and freely partook of the leftovers, eating as if they would get nothing more for four weeks.

When the four minstrels were finished, they put out the light and looked for a place to sleep, each according to his nature and his desire. The donkey lay down on the manure pile, the dog behind the door, the cat on the hearth next to the warm ashes, and the rooster sat on the beam of the roof. Because they were tired from their long journey, they soon fell asleep.

When midnight had passed and the robbers saw from the distance that the light was no longer burning in the house, and everything appeared to be quiet, the captain said, "We shouldn't

have let ourselves be chased off," and he told one of them to go back and investigate the house. The one they sent found everything still and went into the kitchen to strike a light. He mistook the cat's glowing, fiery eyes for live coals and held a sulfur match next to them, so that it would catch fire. But the cat didn't think this was funny and jumped into his face, spitting, and scratching.

He was terribly frightened and ran toward the back door, but the dog, who was lying there, jumped up and bit him in the leg. When he ran across the yard past the manure pile, the donkey gave him a healthy blow with his hind foot, and the rooster, who had been awakened from his sleep by the noise and was now alert, cried down from the beam, "Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

Then the robber ran as fast as he could back to his captain and said, "Oh, there is a horrible witch sitting in the house, she blew at me and scratched my face with her long fingers. And there is a man with a knife standing in front of the door, and he stabbed me in the leg. And a black monster is lying in the yard, and it struck at me with a wooden club. And the judge is sitting up there on the roof, and he was calling out, 'Bring the rascal here.' Then I did what I could to get away."

From that time forth, the robbers did not dare go back into the house. However, the four Bremen Musicians liked it so well there, that they never left it again. And the person who just told that, his mouth is still warm.

- Source: Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, [Die Bremer Stadtmusikanten](#), *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and Household Tales -- Grimms' Fairy Tales), final edition (1857), no. 27.
- The Grimms' source: Dorothea Viehmann (1755-1815).
- The Grimms first published this tale in the second edition of their *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1819). With the exception of a few minor stylistic changes, the story remained essentially unaltered in the editions that followed during the Grimms' lifetime.
- Translated by [D. L. Ashliman](#). © 2001-2006.
- Aarne-Thompson type 130.